



SAMARTH RAMDAS

SHIVAJI'S SPIRITUAL GUIDE

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SAMARTH RAMDAS



IN THE SMALL TOWN OF JAMB IN MAHARASHTRA, THE RAMA NAVAMI FESTIVAL WAS BEING CELEBRATED.



AND SURYAJIPANT THOSAR HURRIED HOME TO SEE HIS SON.

WHEN SURYAJIPANT AND RANUBAI TOOK THEIR CHILD TO PAITHAN AND PLACED HIM AT THE FEET OF EKANATH, THE GREAT SAINT—



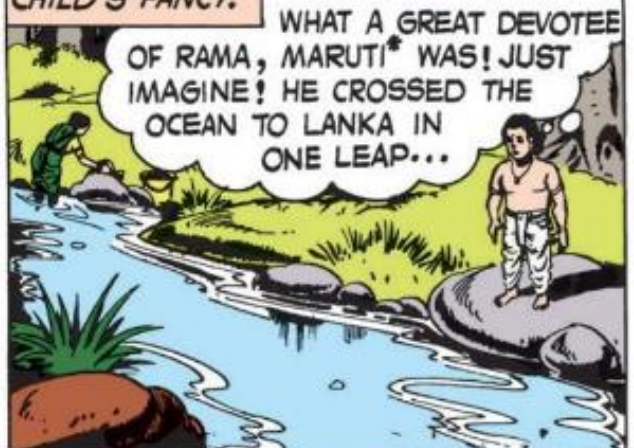
THE CHILD, WHO WAS NAMED NARAYAN, GREW UP TO BE A BRIGHT BOY.

MOTHER, I SHARE MY BIRTHDAY WITH LORD RAMA, DON'T I?

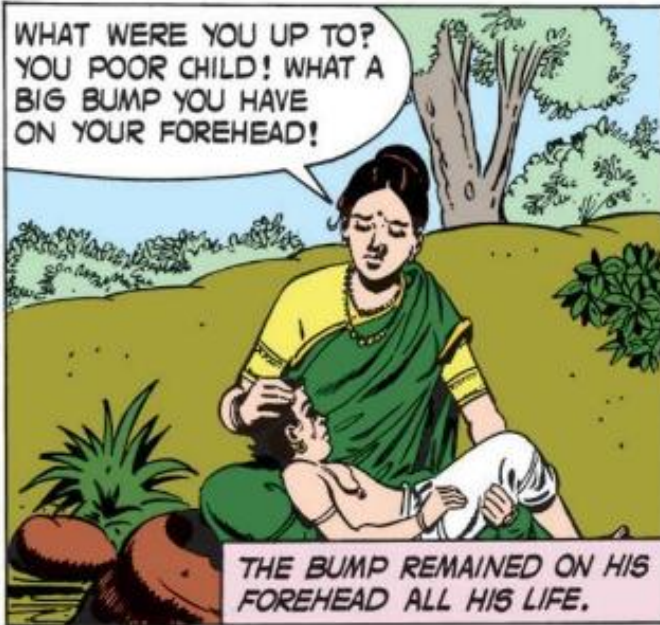
YOU DO, MY CHILD. YOU MUST ALSO STRIVE TO BE LIKE HIM—NOBLE AND GOOD.



BUT IT WAS THE EXPLOITS OF HANUMAN THAT INITIALLY CAUGHT THE ENERGETIC CHILD'S FANCY.



* ANOTHER NAME FOR HANUMAN



WHEN NARAYAN WAS FIVE YEARS OLD, SURYAJIPANT DIED. THEREAFTER NARAYAN'S ELDER BROTHER, GANGADHAR, TOOK CARE OF THE FAMILY. GANGADHAR WAS THE HEAD OF A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL.

MOTHER, WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE COME TO GANGOBA DADA ?

HE IS A TEACHER AND NOVICES COME TO HIM TO LEARN ABOUT GOD.

HE TAKES THEM INTO THAT ROOM AND CLOSES THE DOOR. WHAT DOES HE ' DO THERE ?

HE TEACHES THEM THE SACRED LORE AND MAKES THEM DEVOTEES OF GOD. IT'S CALLED INITIATION.

MOTHER, I WANT TO BE INITIATED.

INITIATED ? YOU ? WHY YOU ARE JUST A BABY !

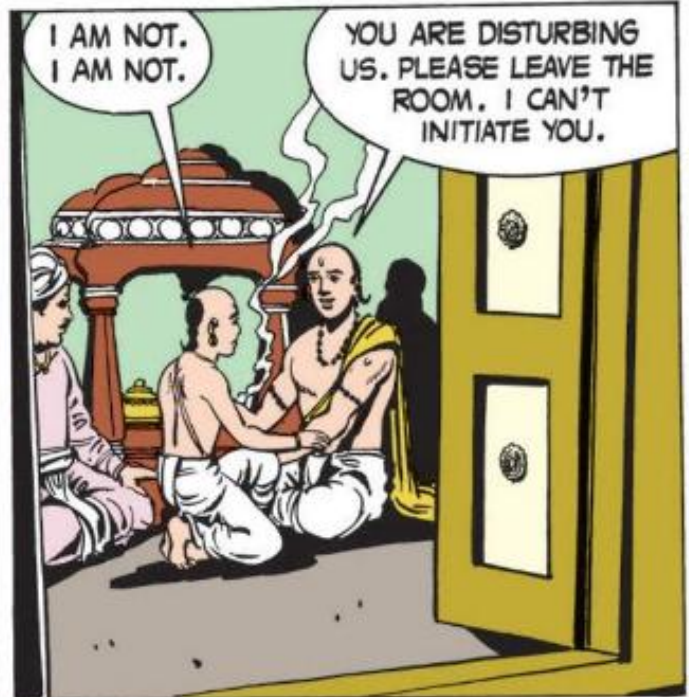
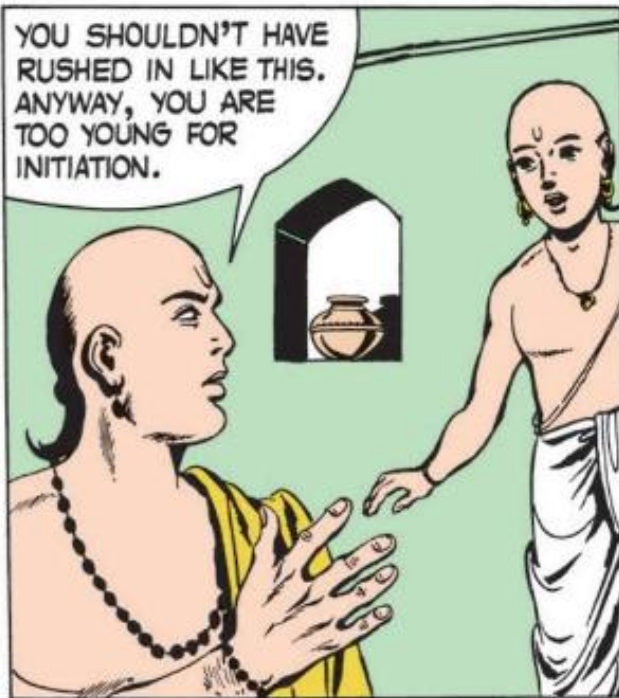
I AM NOT A BABY ! I AM EIGHT YEARS OLD ! I WILL BE INITIATED.

NARAYAN RUSHED INTO HIS BROTHER'S ROOM.

DADA, PLEASE INITIATE ME. TEACH ME THE SACRED MANTRA.*

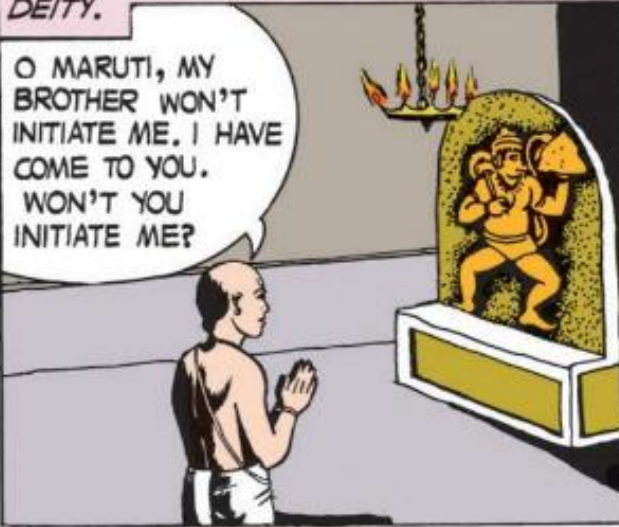
NARAYAN !

* CHANT

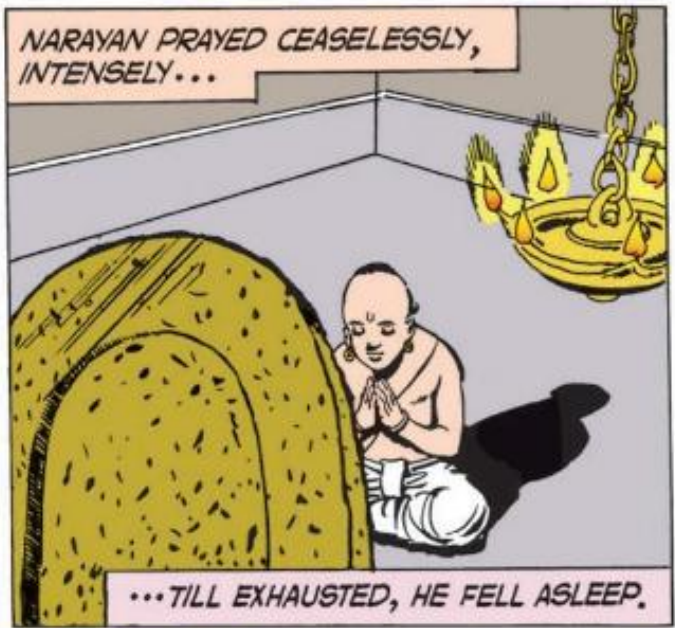


NARAYAN RAN TO THE HANUMAN TEMPLE NEAR BY AND PRAYED TO HIS FAVOURITE DEITY.

O MARUTI, MY BROTHER WON'T INITIATE ME. I HAVE COME TO YOU. WON'T YOU INITIATE ME?

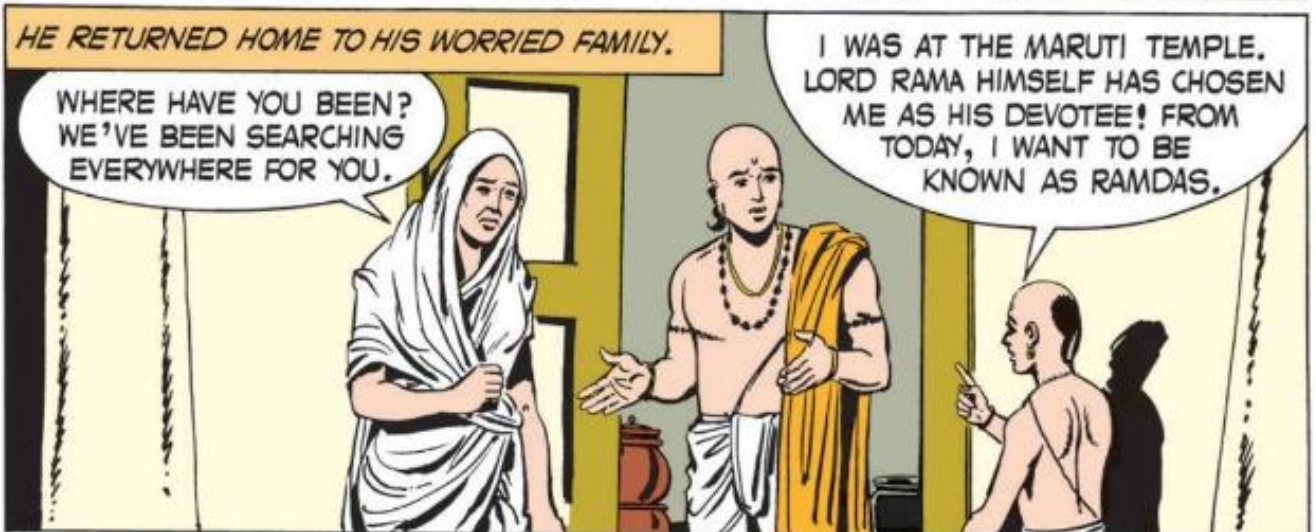
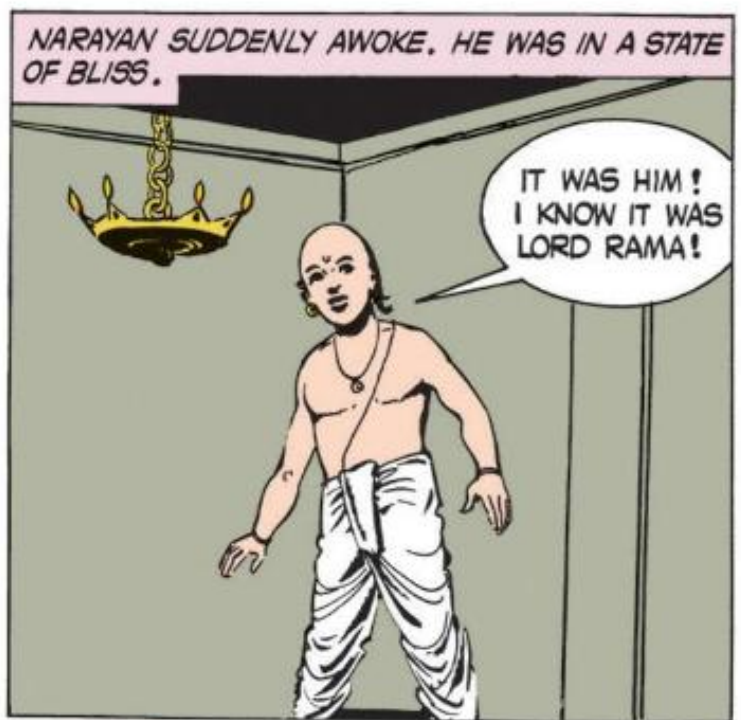
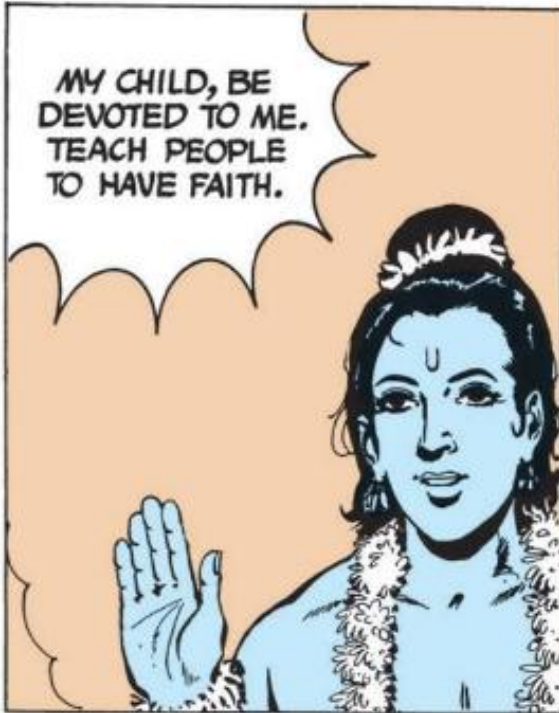


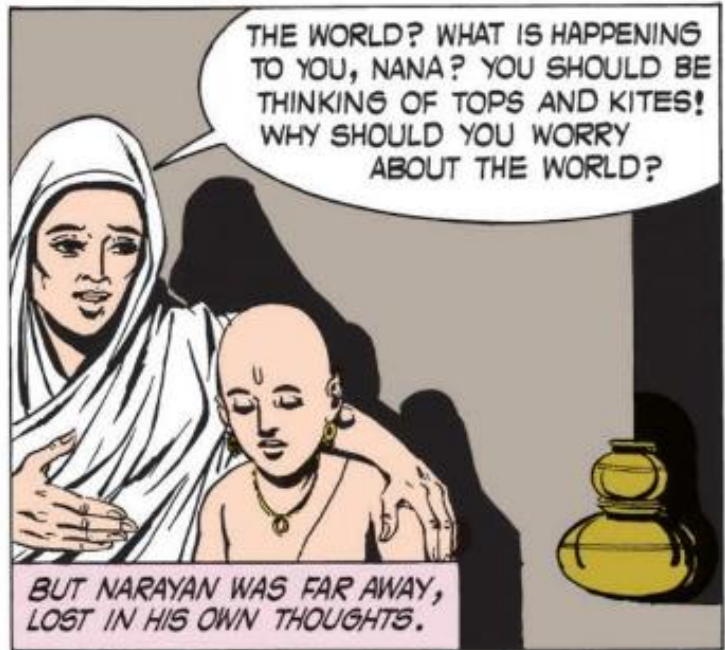
NARAYAN PRAYED CEASELESSLY, INTENSELY...



AND THEN HE HAD A WONDERFUL DREAM.



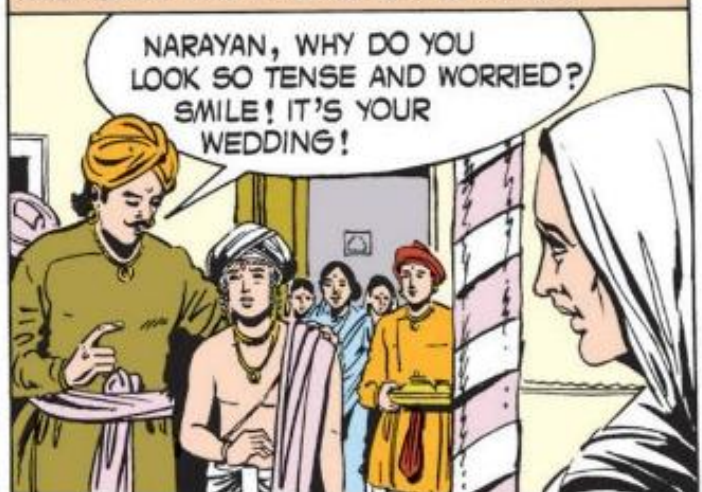




OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, RANUBAI HELPLESSLY WATCHED HER SON GROW FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM HER. AT LAST WHEN NARAYAN WAS TWELVE, SHE DECIDED THAT MARRIAGE WOULD BE THE BEST THING FOR HIM.



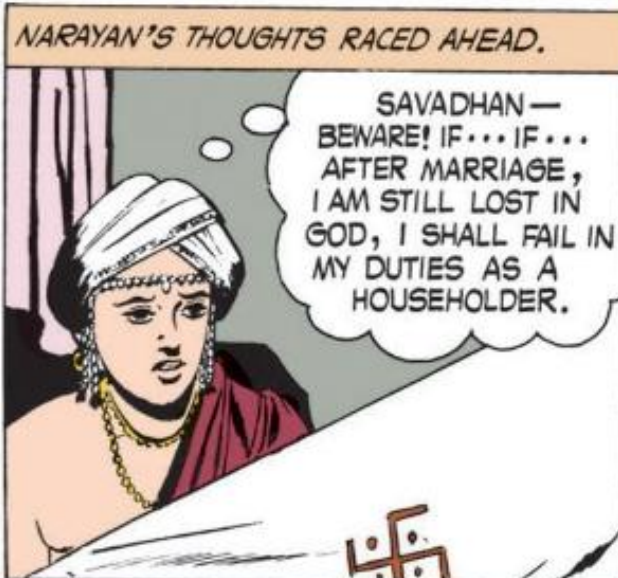
RANUBAI TOOK HIS SILENCE FOR CONSENT AND SOON THE FATEFUL DAY DAWNED.

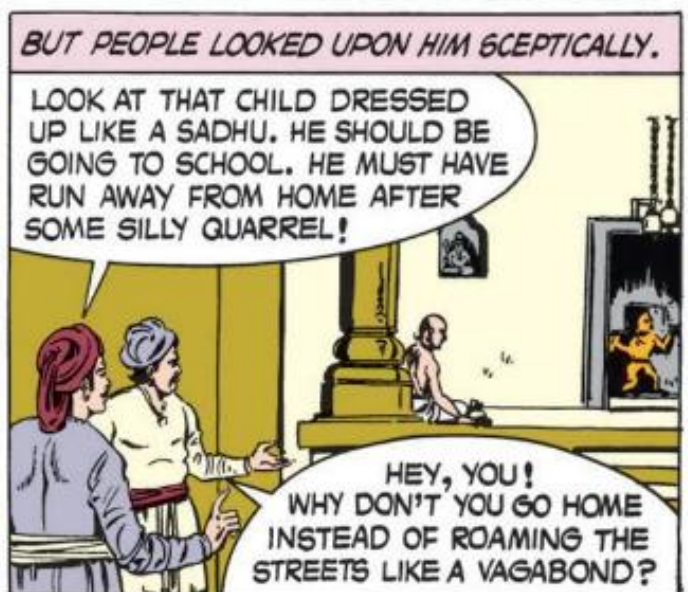
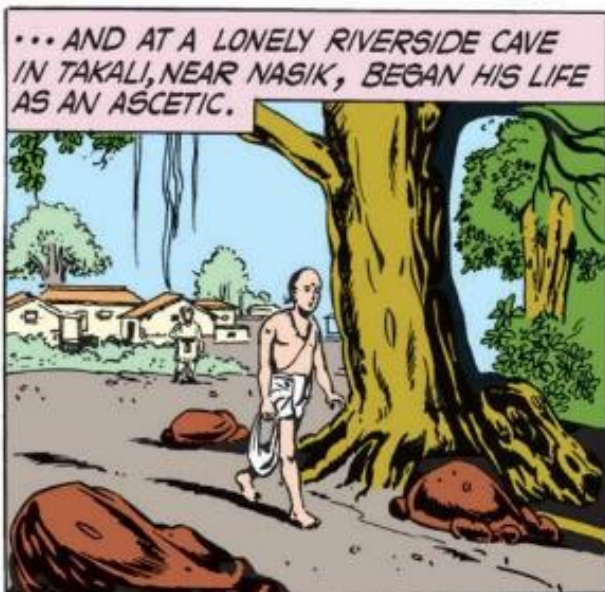
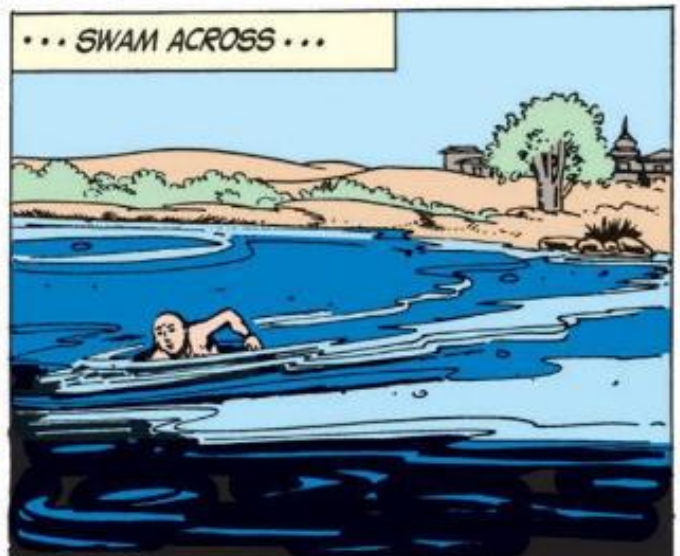
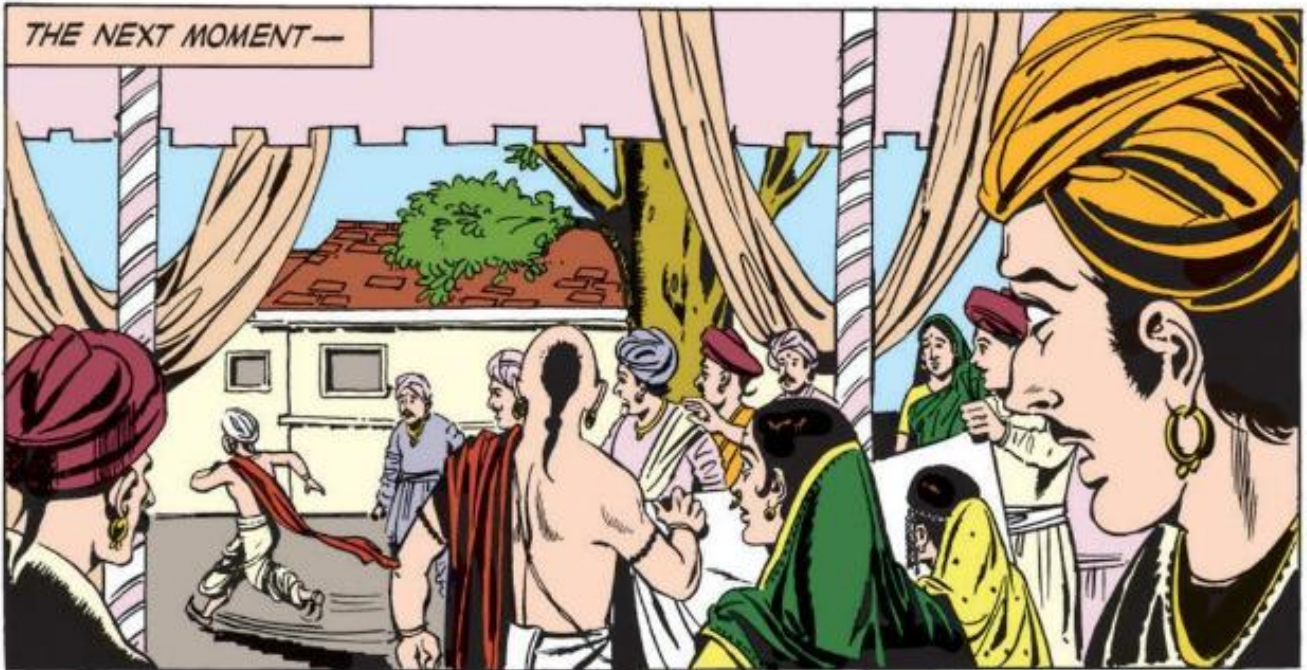


NARAYAN REMAINED SILENT. ONCE THE INITIAL RITES WERE COMPLETED, THE PRIESTS BEGAN UTTERING THE FINAL CHANT.



* BE AWARE

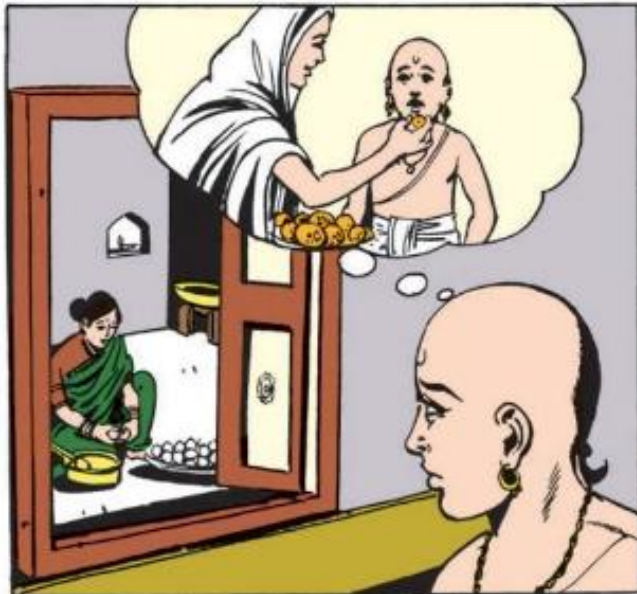




THESE ACCUSATIONS HURT RAMDAS.



THOUGHTS OF HOME TROUBLED THE YOUNG BOY.



HE HAD TO GET USED TO THE IDEA OF BEGGING FOR HIS FOOD, AND EATING WHAT WAS GIVEN TO HIM.

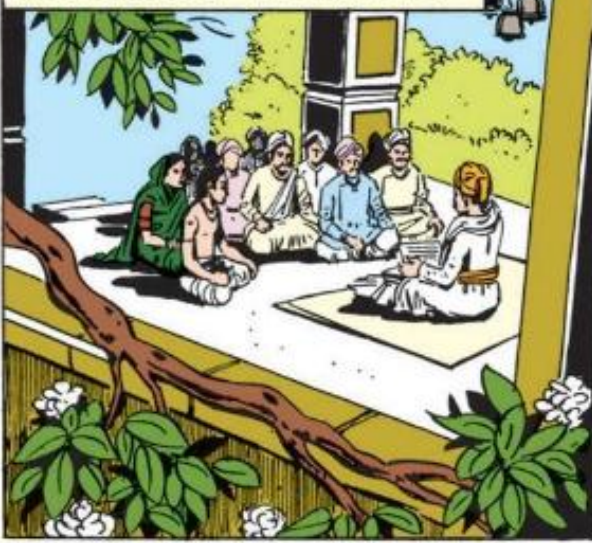
HOW ASHAMED I FEEL TO BEG... AND FOR SUCH STALE FOOD TOO!



BUT NEVER DID HE WAVER FROM HIS CHOSEN PATH.



WITH SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION, HE USED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE HIMSELF. HE LISTENED TO THE DISCOURSES OF THE PANDITS.



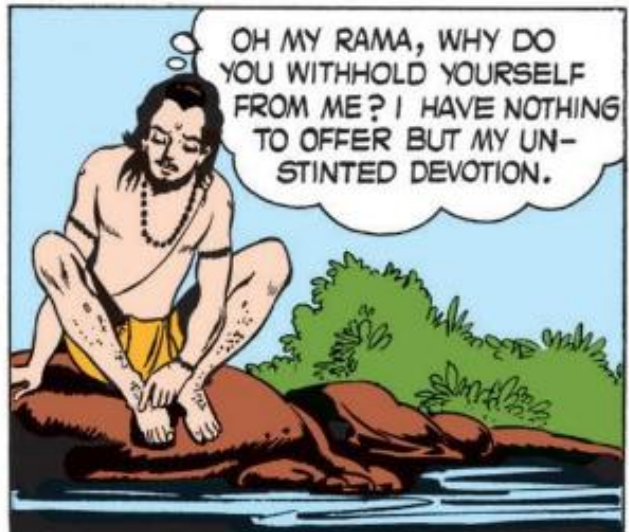
HE PORED OVER THE ANCIENT TEXTS.



FOR SIX HOURS EVERY DAY, HE STOOD IN WAIST-DEEP WATER, PRAYING TO THE SUN.

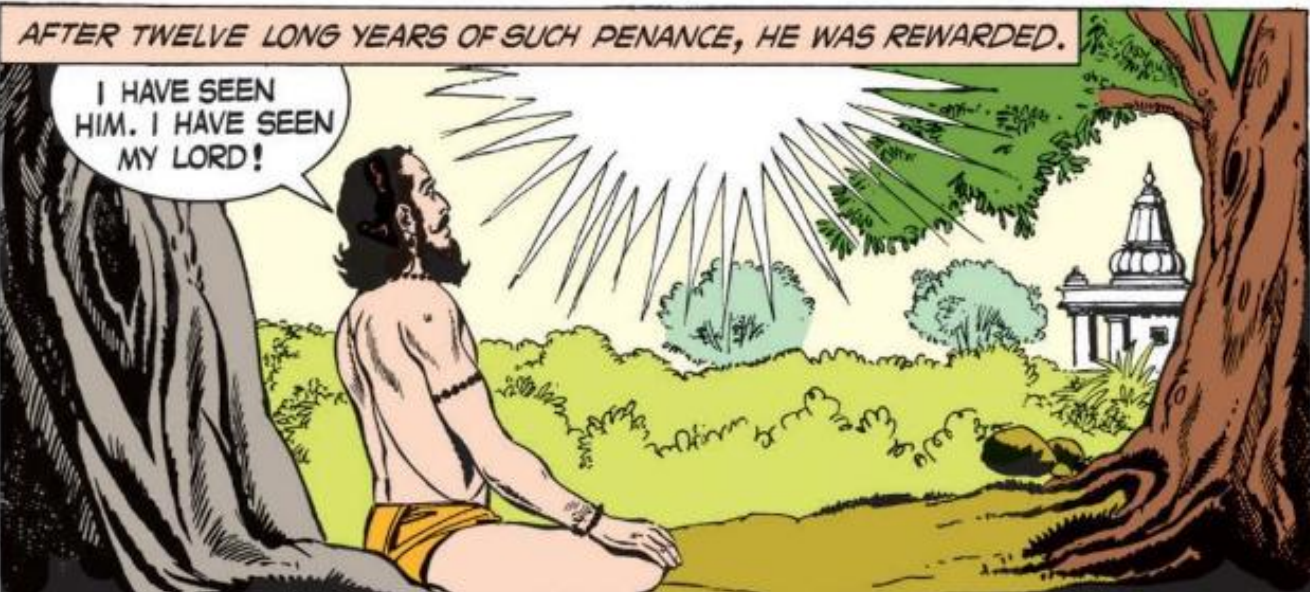


OH MY RAMA, WHY DO YOU WITHHOLD YOURSELF FROM ME? I HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER BUT MY UN-STINTED DEVOTION.

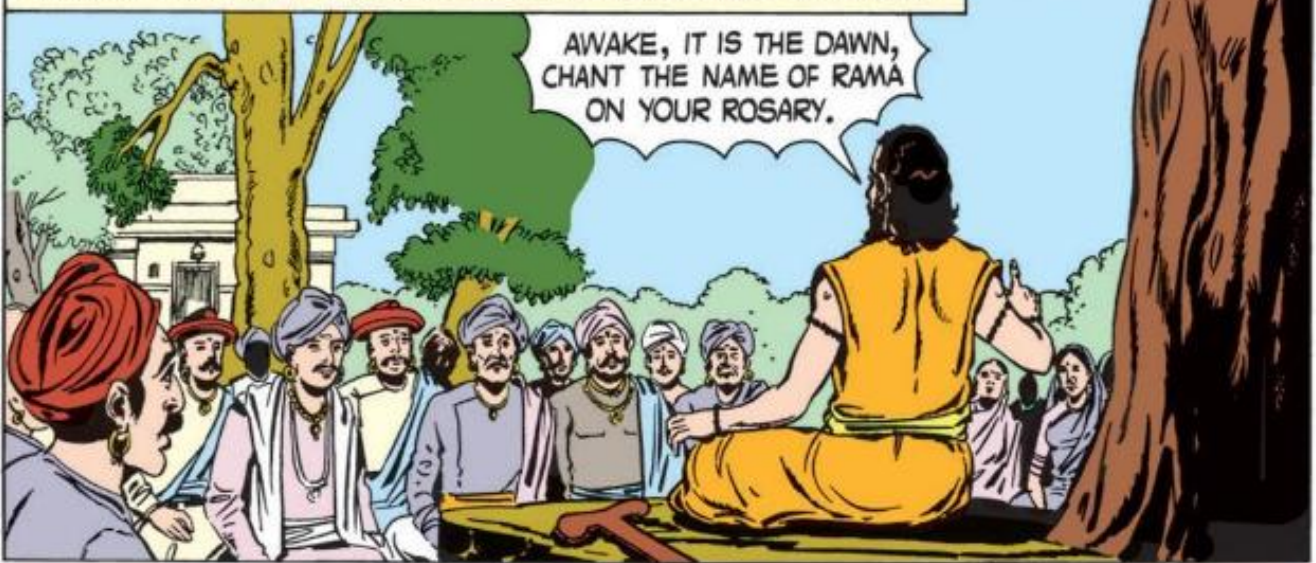


AFTER TWELVE LONG YEARS OF SUCH PENANCE, HE WAS REWARDED.

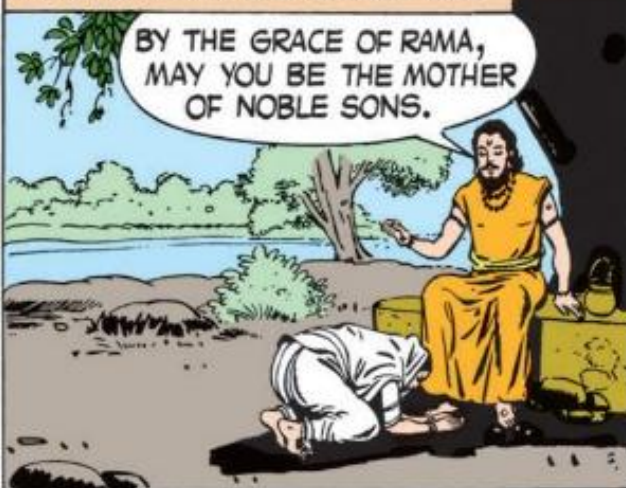
I HAVE SEEN HIM. I HAVE SEEN MY LORD!



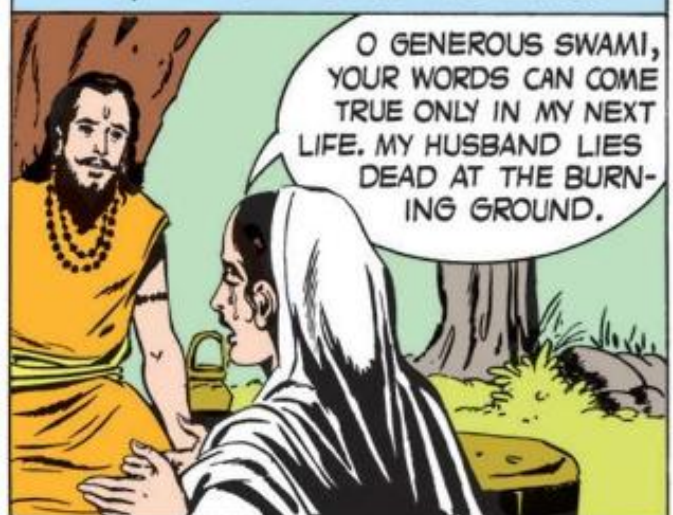
NO LONGER WAS RAMDAS THE UNSURE, AWKWARD BOY. A NEW CONFIDENCE MADE HIM A SEER AND A POET. PEOPLE NOW FLOCKED TO SEE AND HEAR HIM.



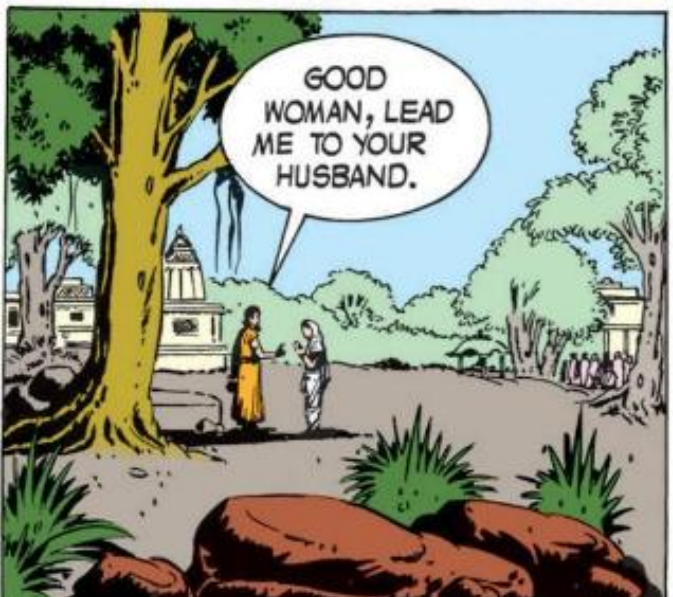
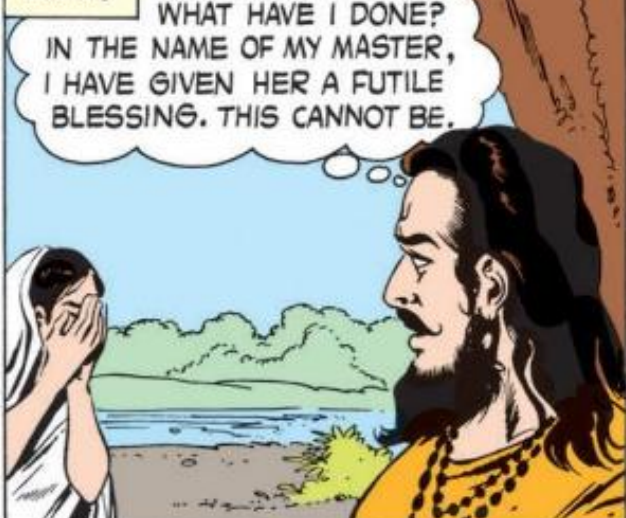
ONE DAY, A YOUNG WOMAN APPROACHED HIM AND RAMDAS BLESSED HER.

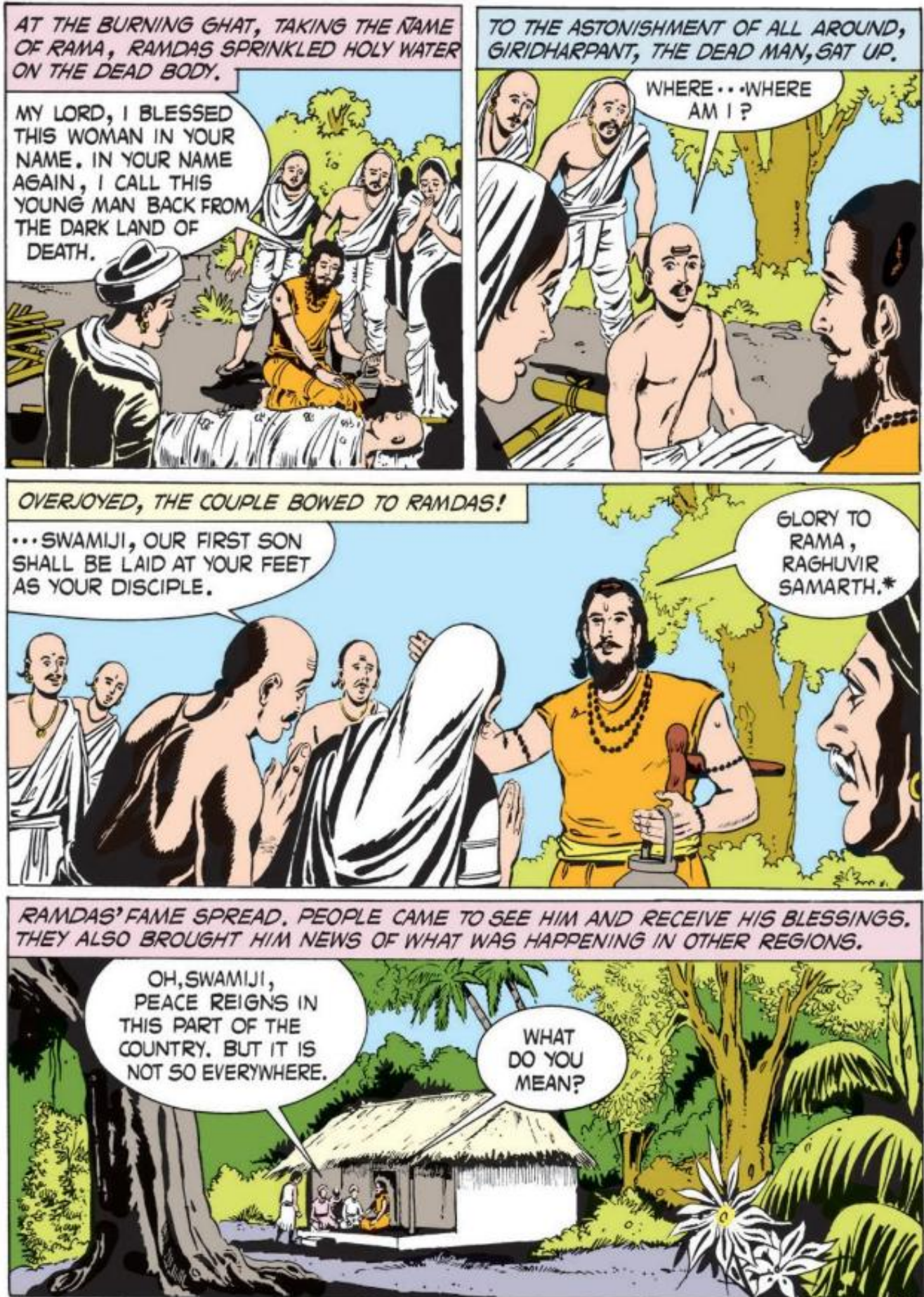


AT THIS, THE WOMAN BURST INTO TEARS.

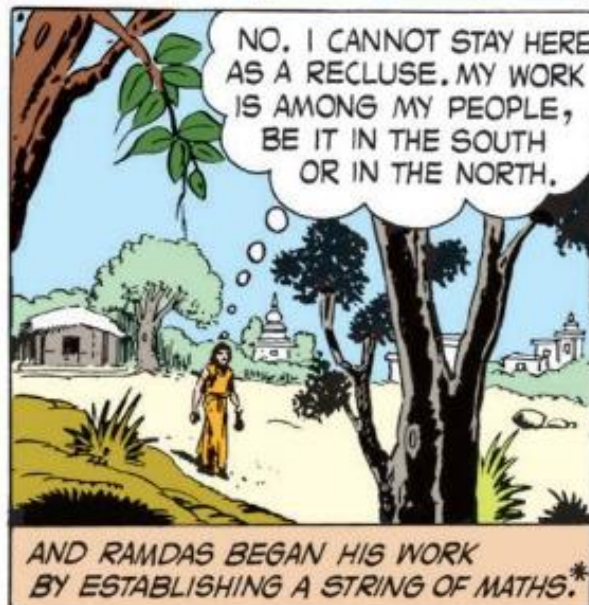
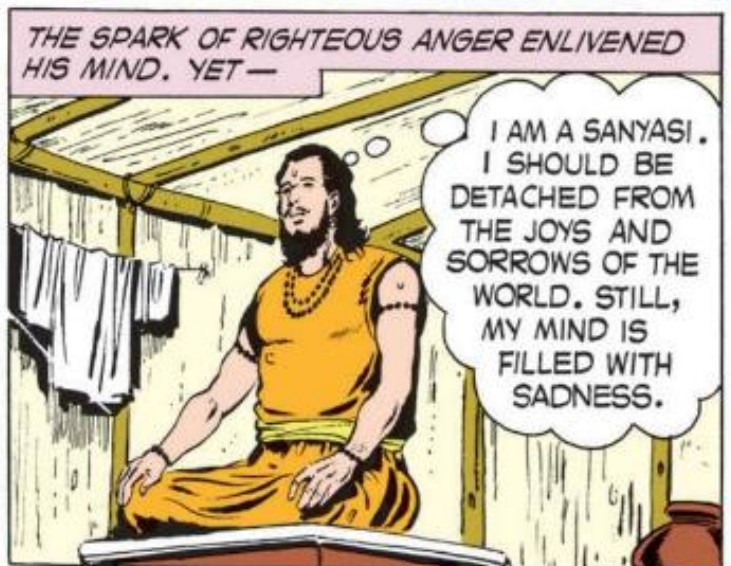
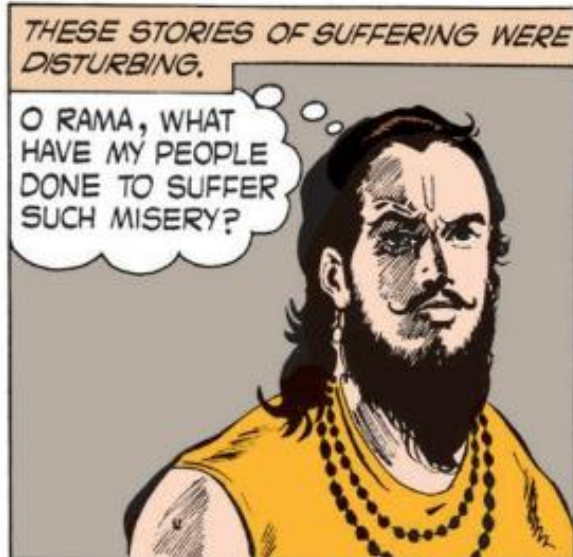
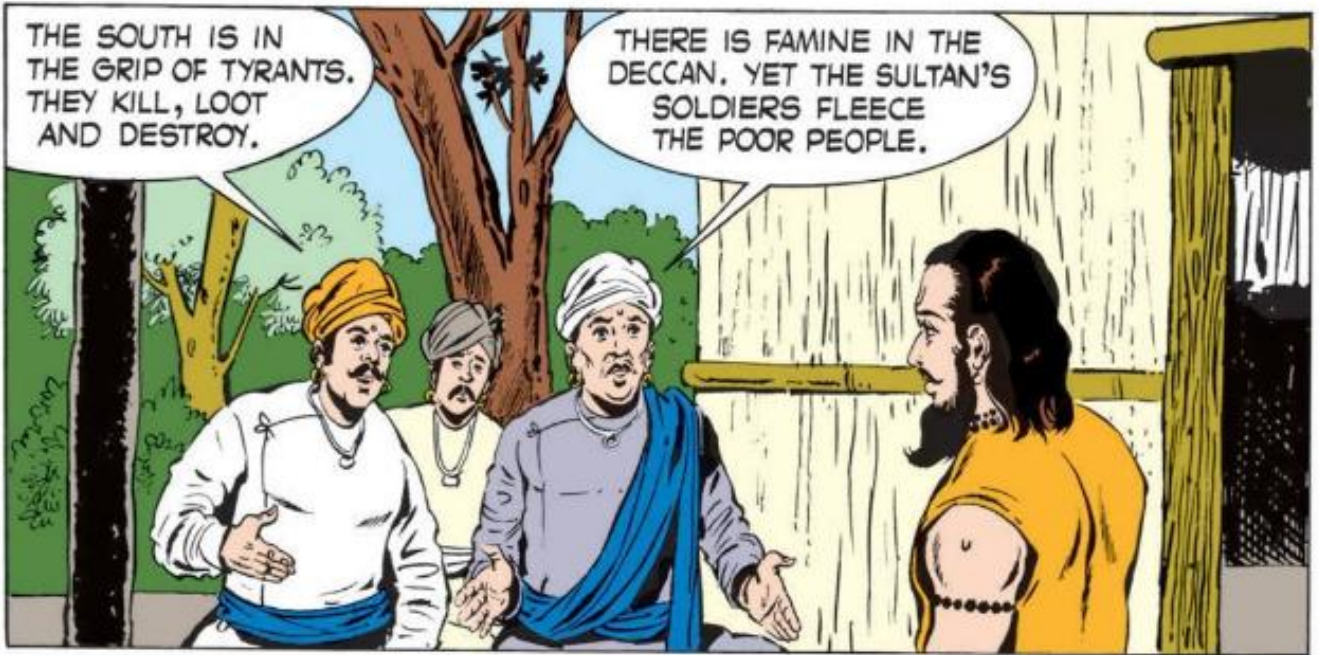


FOR A MOMENT, RAMDAS WAS TAKEN ABACK.





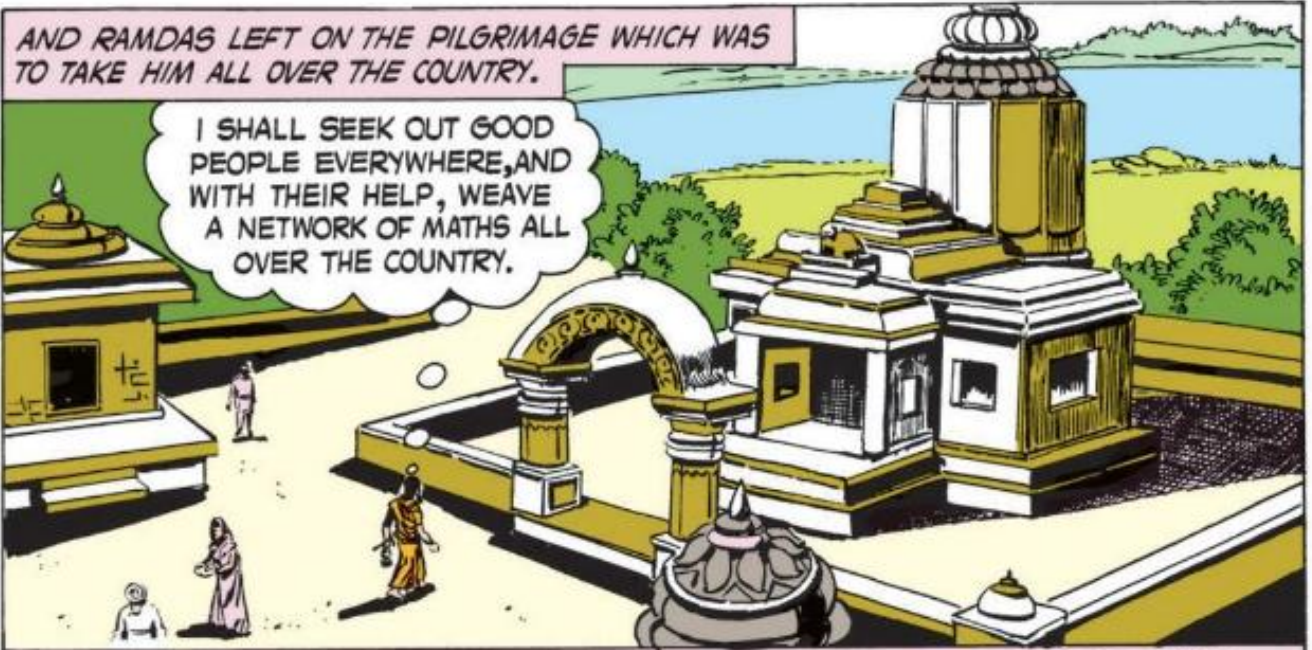
* THE OMNIPOTENT



* RELIGIOUS MONASTERIES

AND RAMDAS LEFT ON THE PILGRIMAGE WHICH WAS TO TAKE HIM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

I SHALL SEEK OUT GOOD PEOPLE EVERYWHERE, AND WITH THEIR HELP, WEAVE A NETWORK OF MATHS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.



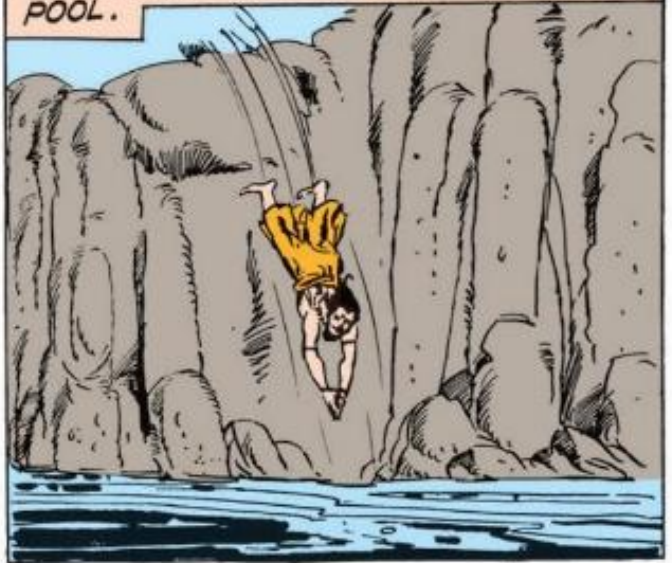
HE VISITED KASHI, AYODHYA, MATHURA AND DWARAKA WHERE HE ESTABLISHED HANUMAN TEMPLES AND MATHS HEADED BY HIS CHOSEN DISCIPLES.

HE THEN SET OUT FOR HOLY BADRI-KEDAR IN THE HIMALAYAS. ON HIS WAY THERE, HE WAS OVERCOME BY A SUDDEN REVULSION FOR HIS MORTAL BODY.

WHEN I HAVE ALREADY REALISED GOD, WHY SHOULD I BEAR THE BURDEN OF THIS MORTAL FRAME?



AND RAMDAS THREW HIMSELF INTO AN ICY POOL.

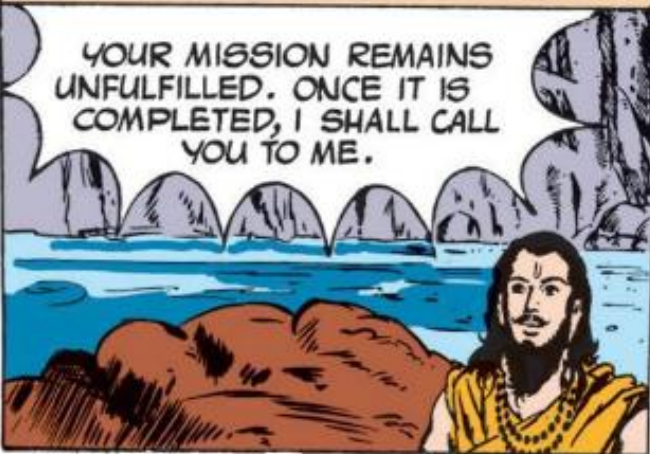


BUT SAVED BY THE HAND OF GOD, HE LAY UNCONSCIOUS ON THE EDGE OF THE POOL.



WHEN HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS—

YOUR MISSION REMAINS UNFULFILLED. ONCE IT IS COMPLETED, I SHALL CALL YOU TO ME.



RAMDAS HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE VOICE WAS HANUMAN'S.

O HANUMAN, I AM BUT YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT. YOUR WILL SHALL BE DONE.



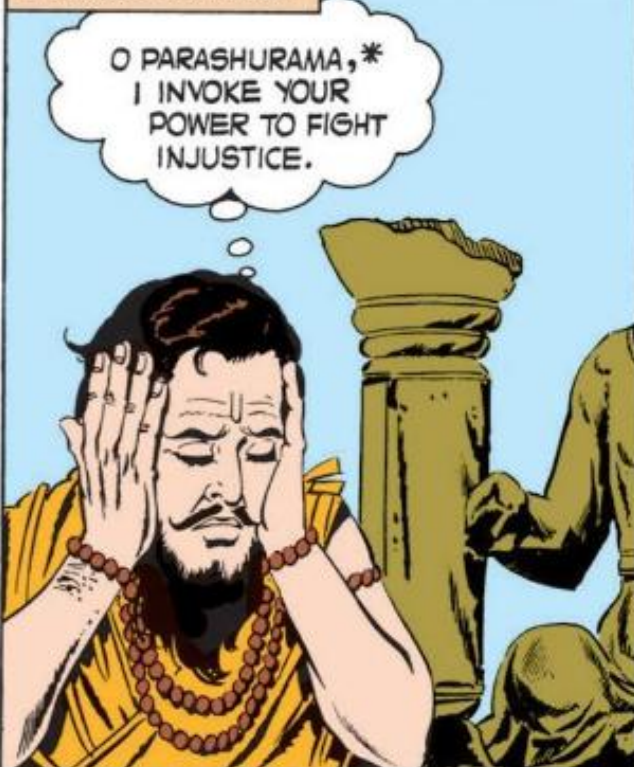
FROM THE HIMALAYAS, HE CAME DOWN SOUTH AND REACHED HAMPI — ONCE THE PROUD CAPITAL OF THE VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE, NOW IN RUINS. THE SIGHT FILLED HIM WITH SADNESS.

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS ONCE THE SITE OF A GLORIOUS CITY.



FROM HAMPI, A DEEPLY AGITATED RAMDAS TRAVELLED WESTWARDS AND REACHED CHIPLUN.

O PARASHURAMA,* I INVOKE YOUR POWER TO FIGHT INJUSTICE.



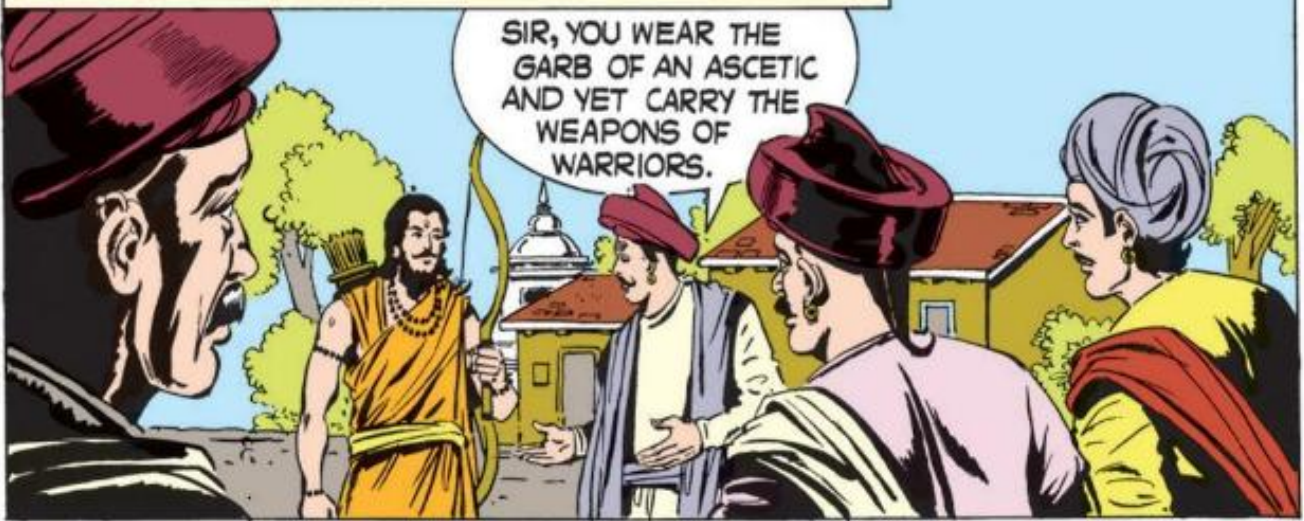
LATER, AT THE TEMPLE IN PANDHARPUR —

O VITHOBA, YOU ARE NONE OTHER THAN RAMA. WHERE IS YOUR BOW? WHERE ARE YOUR ARROWS? I WILL TAKE THEM UP WHEREVER YOU MIGHT HAVE DISCARDED THEM.



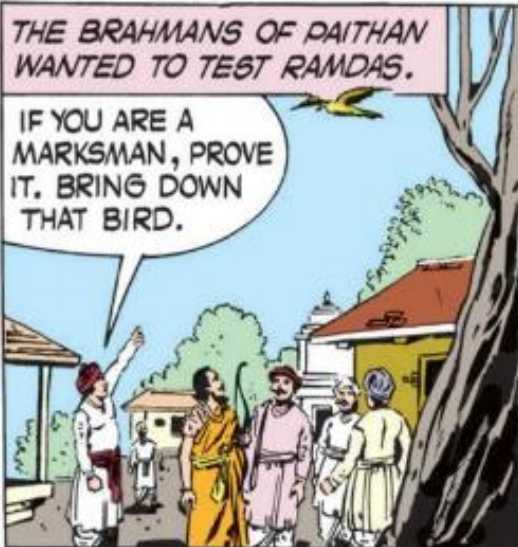
* AN AVATAR OF VISHNU

RAMDAS HAD DECIDED UPON ACTION AND LATER, WHEN HE REACHED PAITHAN, THE PEOPLE THERE WERE AMAZED TO FIND THIS ASCETIC CARRYING A BOW AND ARROWS.



THE BRAHMANS OF PAITHAN WANTED TO TEST RAMDAS.

IF YOU ARE A MARKSMAN, PROVE IT. BRING DOWN THAT BIRD.



RAMDAS TOOK AIM AND HIS ARROW BROUGHT DOWN THE BIRD.



THE BRAHMANS WERE SHOCKED.

OH, NO! SIR, HOW COULD YOU! YOU HAVE SINNED IN KILLING THIS INNOCENT BIRD. YOU MUST ATONE FOR IT.



RAMDAS PERFORMED THE RITES OF ATONEMENT AS LAID DOWN BY THE BRAHMANS.



THEN HE TURNED TO THEM .

YOU SAY I AM NOW FREE FROM SIN. BUT TRUE ATONEMENT LIES ONLY IN RESTORING LIFE TO THIS BIRD.

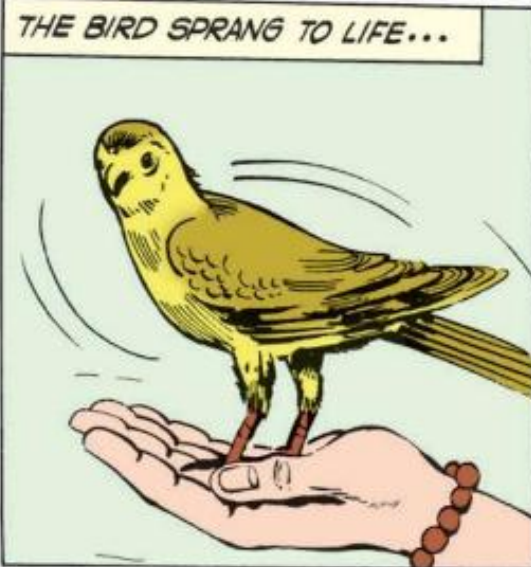


RAMDAS GENTLY PICKED UP THE LIMP BIRD.

RAMA, YOUR DEVOTEE BEGS YOU TO WASH HIM CLEAR OF HIS SIN. LET THE BIRD COME ALIVE AGAIN.



THE BIRD SPRANG TO LIFE...



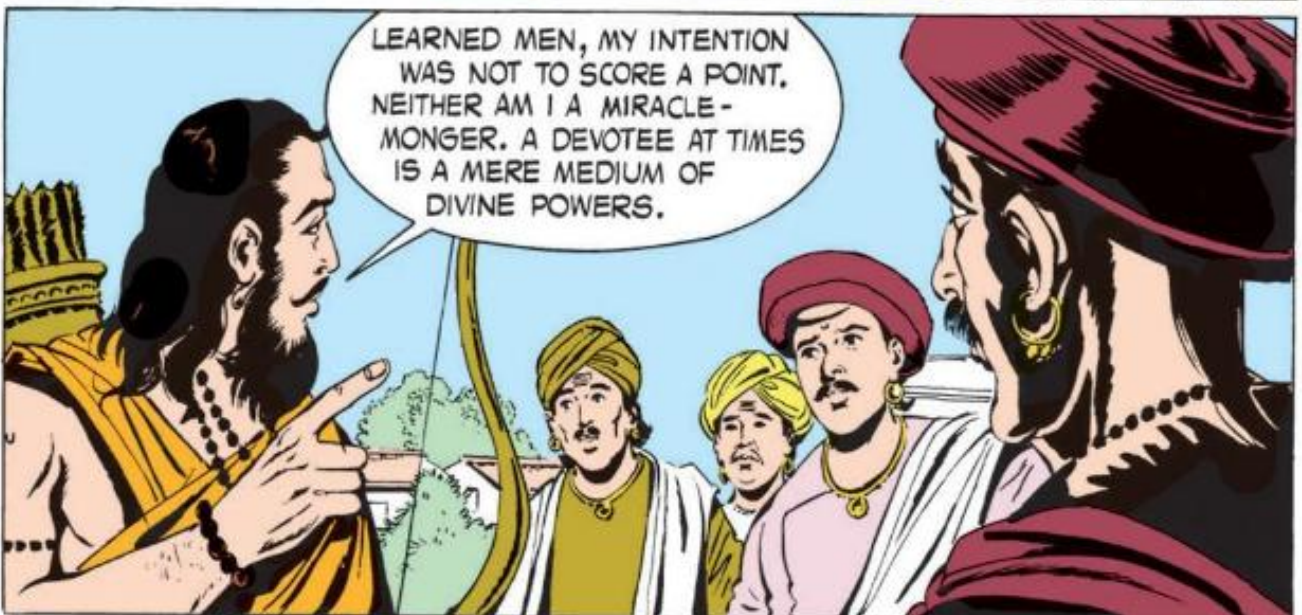
...SPREAD ITS WINGS AND SOARED AWAY TO FREEDOM.

MIRACULOUS!

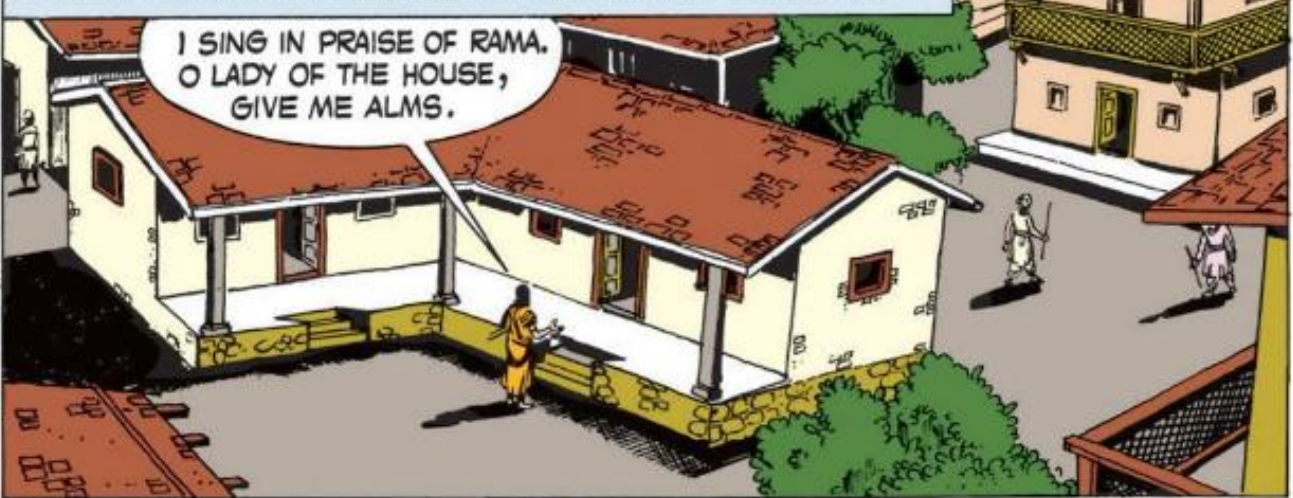
GREAT ONE, YOU ARE A SAMARTH. TRULY A SAMARTH!



LEARNED MEN, MY INTENTION WAS NOT TO SCORE A POINT, NEITHER AM I A MIRACLE-MONGER. A DEVOTEE AT TIMES IS A MERE MEDIUM OF DIVINE POWERS.



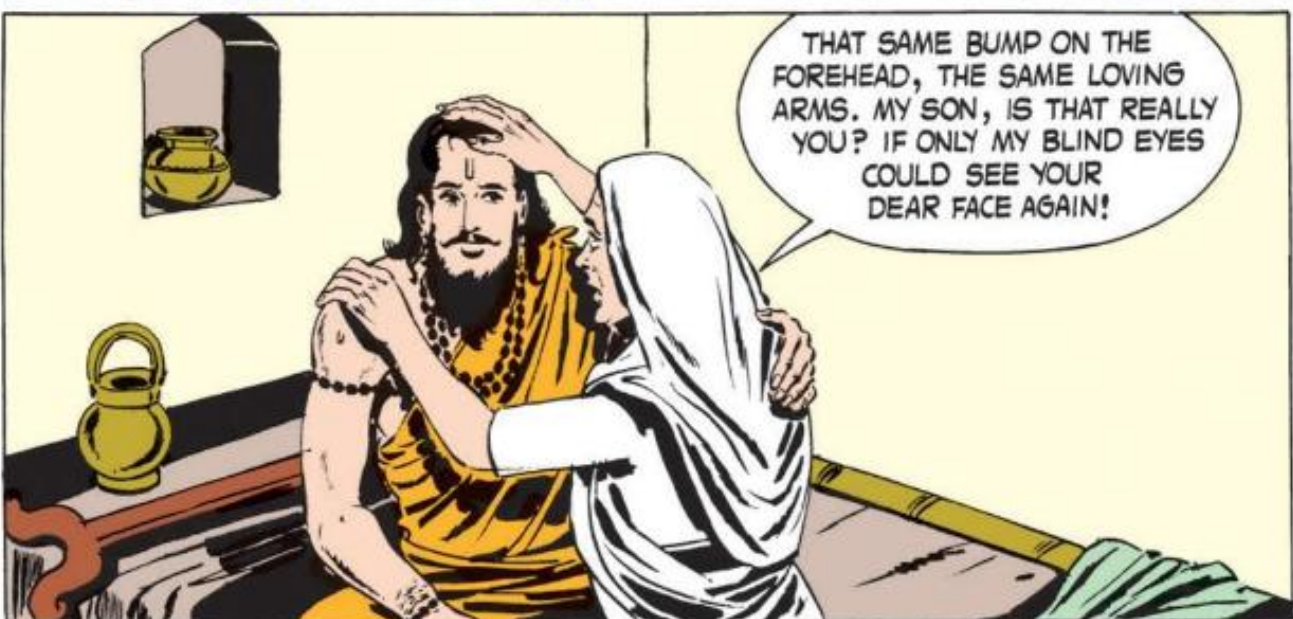
RAMDAS' WANDERING PILGRIMAGE LED HIM TO JAMB, HIS NATIVE VILLAGE, WHICH HE HAD LEFT TWENTY-THREE YEARS AGO. HE WENT TO HIS HOUSE AND STOOD AT THE FAMILIAR DOORSTEP.

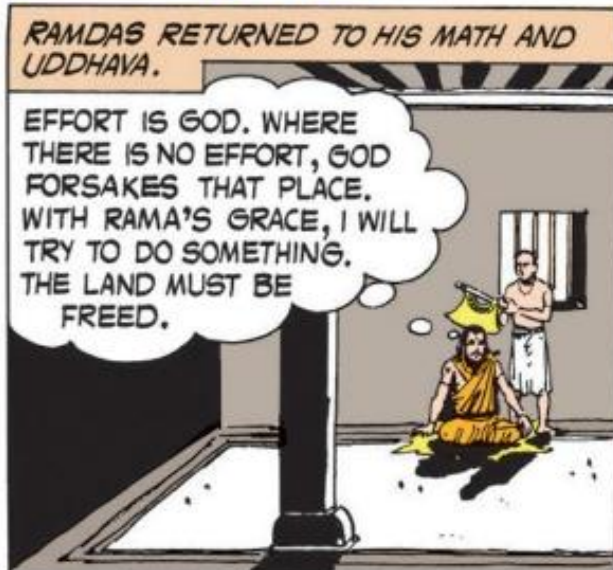
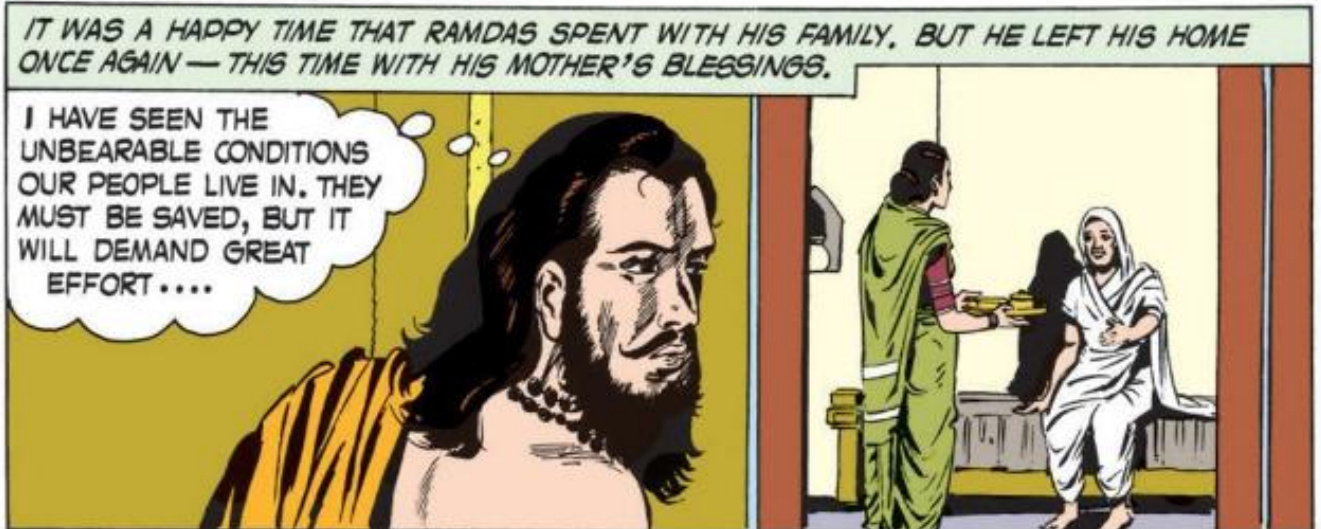


GANGADHAR'S WIFE DID NOT RECOGNISE RAMDAS.



AND RAMDAS WALKED IN.





THE LEADER RAMDAS WAS LOOKING FOR WAS STILL A YOUNGSTER — SHIVAJI, THE SON OF A MARATHA NOBLEMAN, SHAHAJI BHOSLE.



YOUNG SHIVAJI SEEMED TO KNOW EVERY STONE IN THE WILD, HILLY TERRAIN OF MAVAL,* WHERE HE GREW UP.

SHIVAJI HAD HEARD STORIES OF THE GREAT HEROES OF THE PAST FROM HIS MOTHER, JIJABAI.



SHIVAJI'S COMRADES WERE THE HARDY, LOYAL YOUTHS OF MAVAL, IN WHOSE COMPANY HE LEARNT TO RIDE AND FIGHT.



* IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

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* IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA



LATER, THEY MET AGAIN AT SHINGANAWADI. AT SHIVAJI'S REQUEST, RAMDAS INITIATED HIM AS HIS DEVOTEE.



MAY YOU UNITE THE PEOPLE UNDER YOUR RULE. MAY YOU GOVERN ACCORDING TO DHARMA * AND RELIEVE THE MISERY OF THE PEOPLE. MAY YOU SUCCEED IN ALL YOUR EFFORTS.

YOU INSPIRE ME, O SAMARTH. I WILL NOT FAIL YOU.



ONE DAY, RAMDAS SENT WORD THAT HE WAS ILL. SHIVAJI HURRIED TO HIS SIDE.

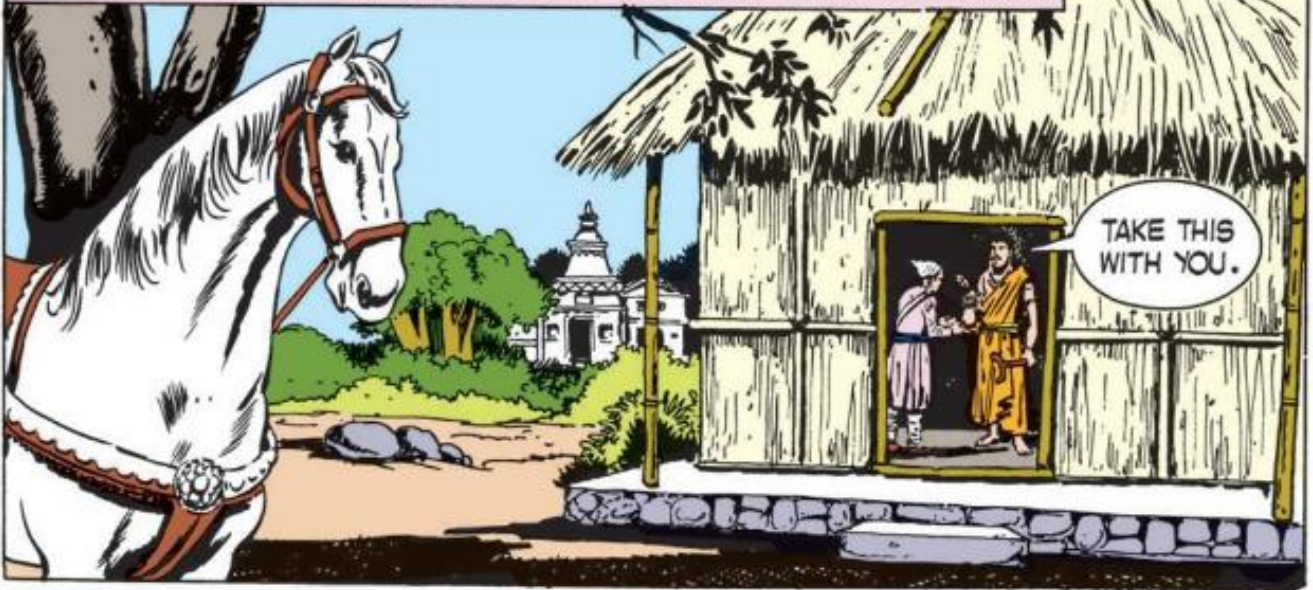
SAMARTH, I WILL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE YOU WELL. PLEASE TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD DO.

THE ONLY MEDICINE THAT WILL CURE ME IS THE MILK OF A TIGRESS.

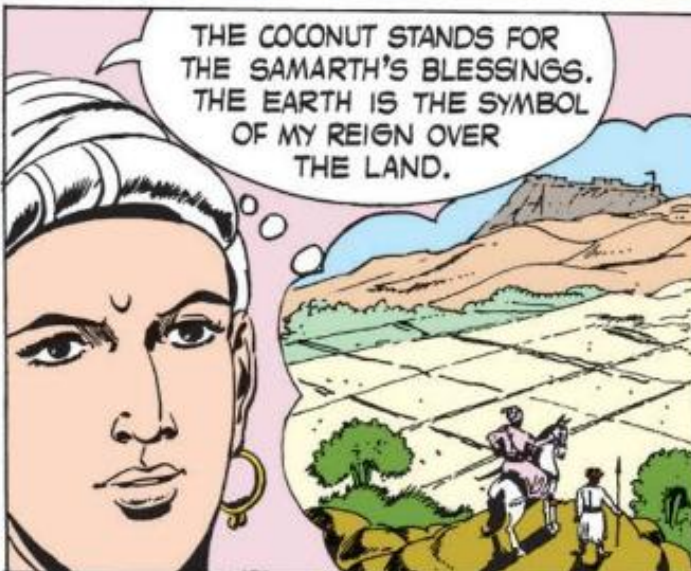


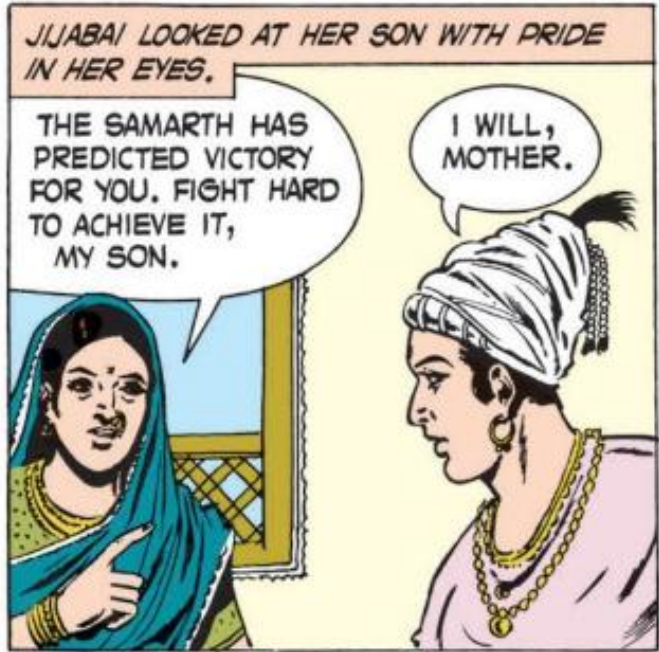
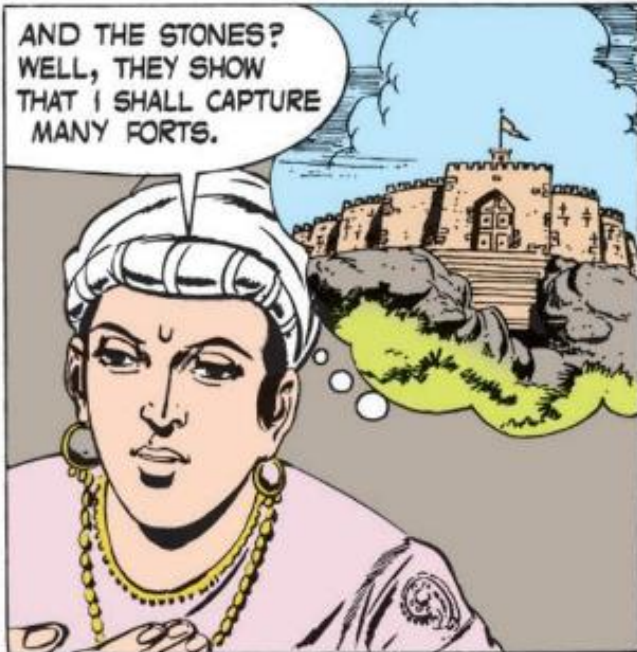


PLEASED WITH SHIVAJI, RAMDAS MADE A SACRED OFFERING TO HIM.



WHEN SHIVAJI REACHED HOME, HE OPENED THE BUNDLE IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS MOTHER. WHAT IT CONTAINED TOOK JIJABAI BY SURPRISE.

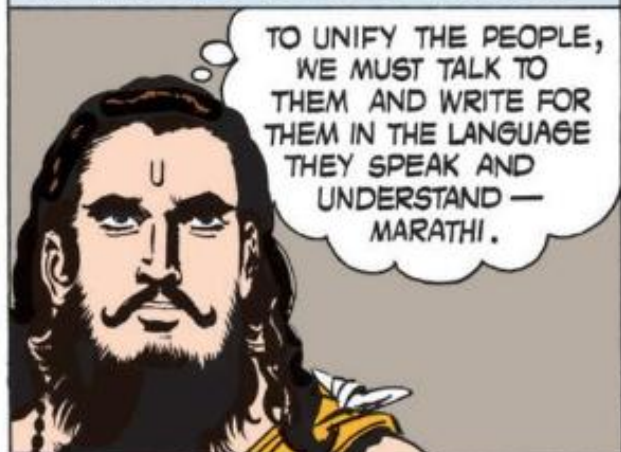




SHIVAJI AND HIS MEN MADE THEIR FIRST MOVE. THEY ATTACKED AND CAPTURED THE FORT OF TORNA AND LATER OF RAJGADH. SHIVAJI MARCHED FROM VICTORY TO VICTORY.

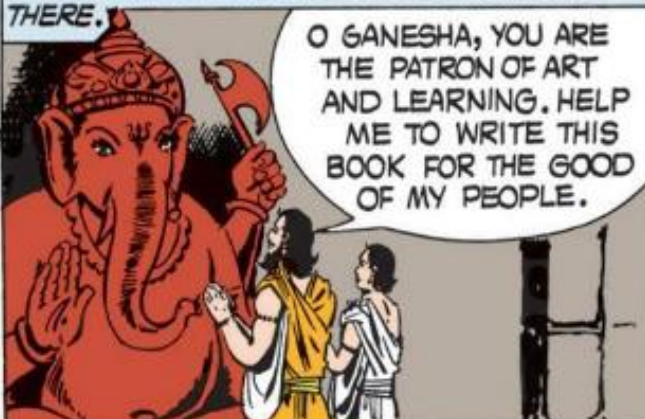


MEANWHILE RAMDAS DECIDED TO PUT HIS TEACHINGS TOGETHER IN A BOOK.



RAMDAS ALSO PERSUADED MANY SCHOLARS WHO WROTE IN CLASSICAL SANSKRIT TO CHANGE OVER TO MARATHI.

HE RETIRED TO A REMOTE CAVE AT SHIVATHAR AND INSTALLED A LARGE IDOL OF GANESHA THERE.



RAMDAS DICTATED HIS GREAT BOOK, THE DASBODH — THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE DEVOTEE — TO KALYAN, ONE OF HIS DEAREST DISCIPLES.

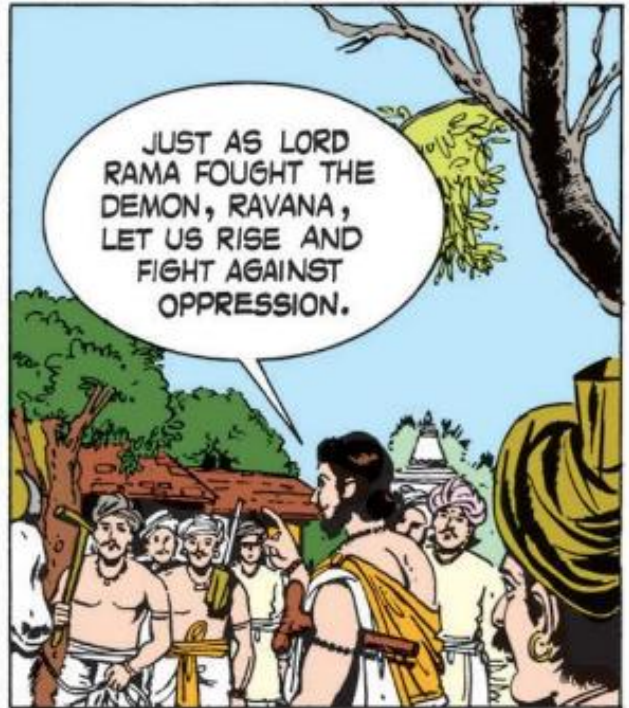


RAMDAS WORKED ON IT WHENEVER HE COULD FIND TIME. IT TOOK TEN LONG YEARS TO COMPLETE THE WORK.

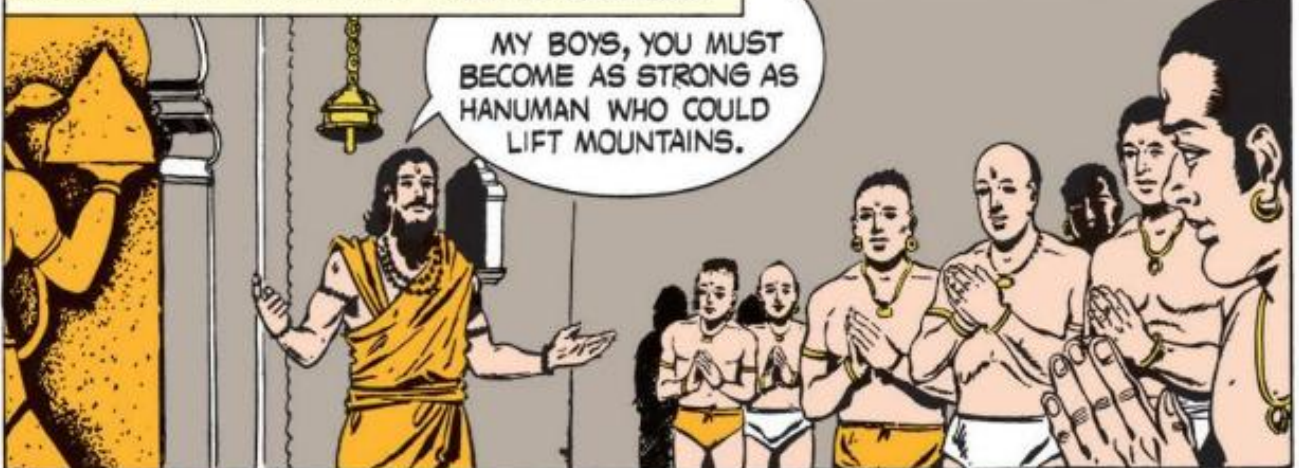
HIS DISCIPLES WENT OUT AMONG THE PEOPLE, HELPING THEM, INSPIRING THEM, AND MOBILISING THEM TO FIGHT INJUSTICE.



JUST AS LORD RAMA FOUGHT THE DEMON, RAVANA, LET US RISE AND FIGHT AGAINST OPPRESSION.



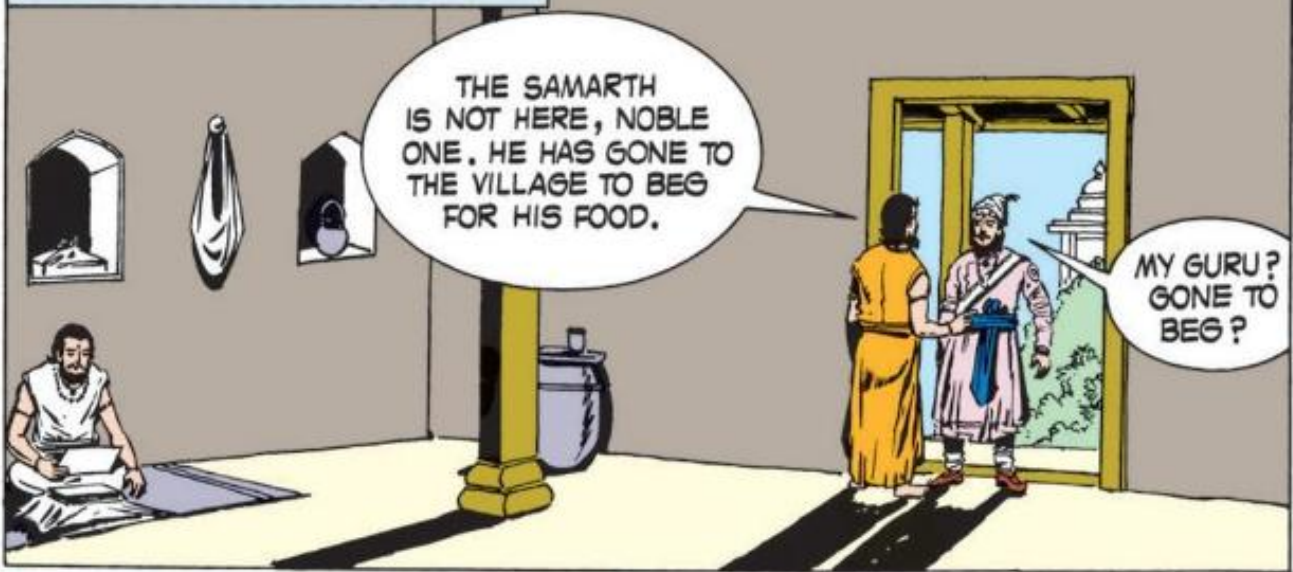
THEY ALSO TRAINED YOUNG MEN AND BOYS IN GYMNASTICS AND THE MARTIAL ARTS. RAMDAS OFTEN VISITED THE TRAINING CENTRES.



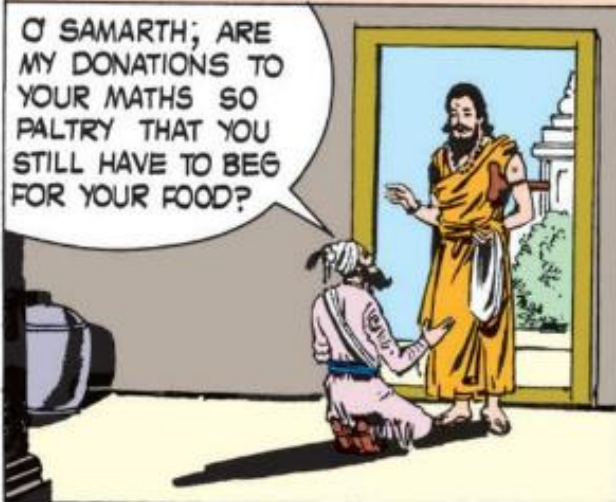
INSPIRED BY THE CALL GIVEN BY RAMDAS, SEVERAL YOUNG MEN CAME FORWARD TO JOIN SHIVAJI.



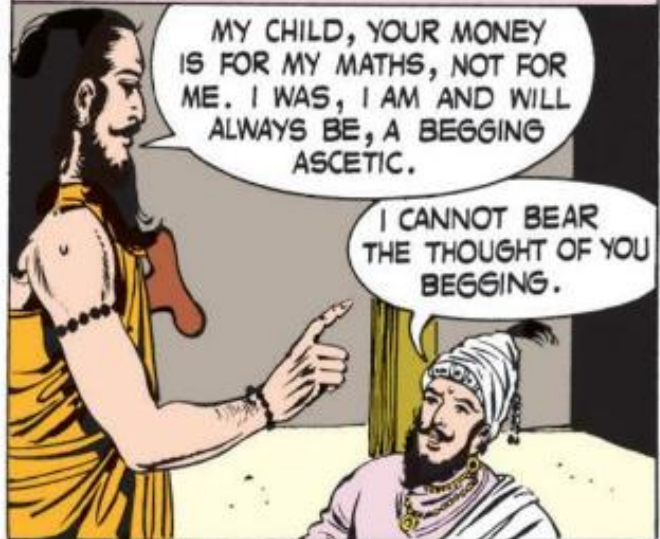
SHIVAJI WOULD OFTEN GO TO RAMDAS FOR ADVICE. ONE DAY HE CALLED UNEXPECTEDLY.



SHIVAJI WAS UPSET. WHEN RAMDAS RETURNED, HE KNELT BEFORE HIM.

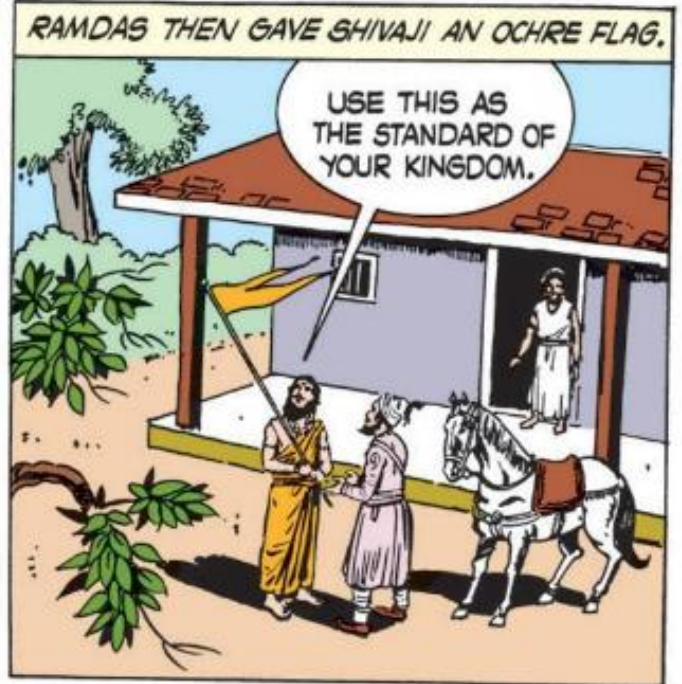
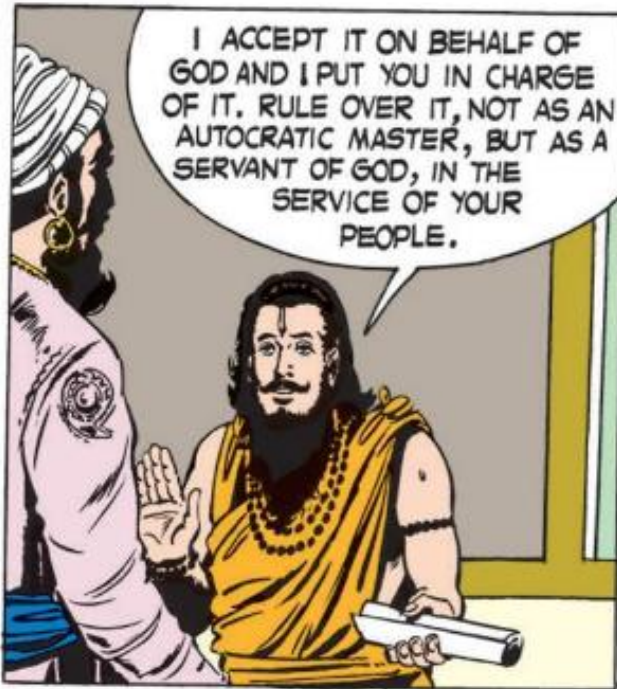


RAMDAS SMILED DOWN AT HIS DISCIPLE.



IN A MOMENTOUS DECISION, SHIVAJI MADE A DEED, GIFTING AWAY HIS KINGDOM TO RAMDAS.





IT WAS THIS VERY FLAG THAT FLEW ON THE LOFTY FORTS THAT SHIVAJI CAPTURED; WHILE ON THE SHIPS OF SHIVAJI'S NAVY FLUTTERED AN OCHRE SAIL.



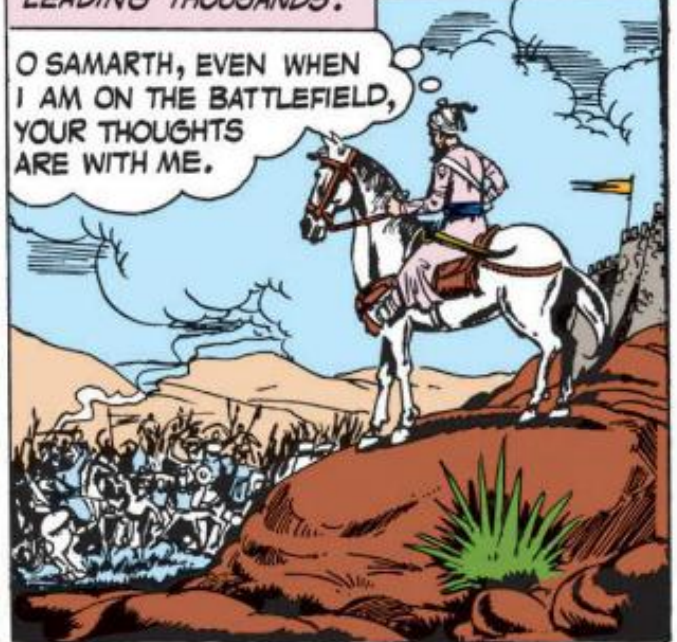
HIS GURU RAMDAS' BLESSINGS AFTER EACH VICTORY INSPIRED HIM ON TO THE NEXT.

YOU HAVE BEEN JUST AND RIGHTEOUS; MANY HAVE TAKEN FRIGHT, MANY HAVE SOUGHT YOUR PROTECTION. GREETINGS TO YOU, O BENEVOLENT KING...



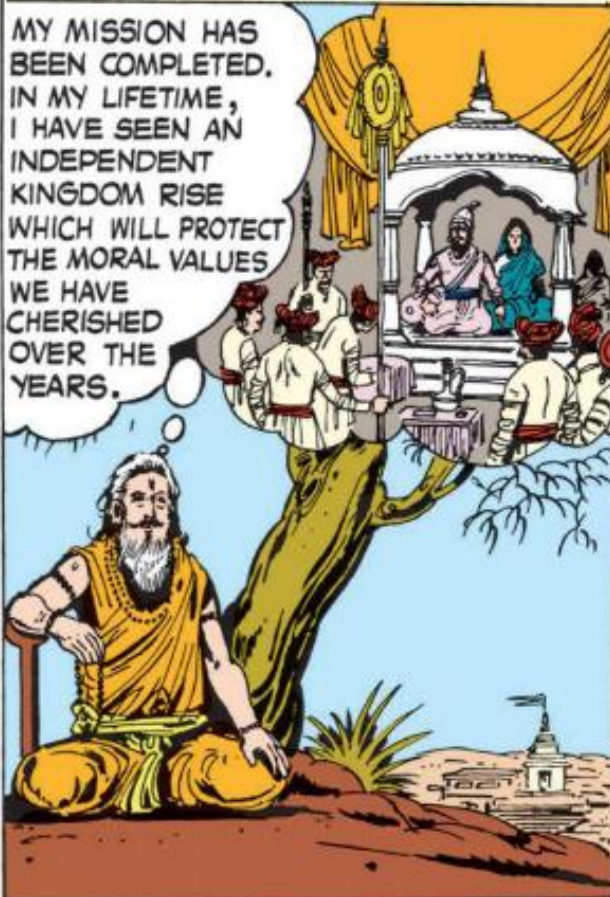
FROM A SMALL-TIME REBEL WITH A HANDFUL OF MEN SCATTERED OVER BARREN VALLEYS, SHIVAJI WAS NOW A MIGHTY GENERAL, LEADING THOUSANDS.

O SAMARTH, EVEN WHEN I AM ON THE BATTLEFIELD, YOUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH ME.



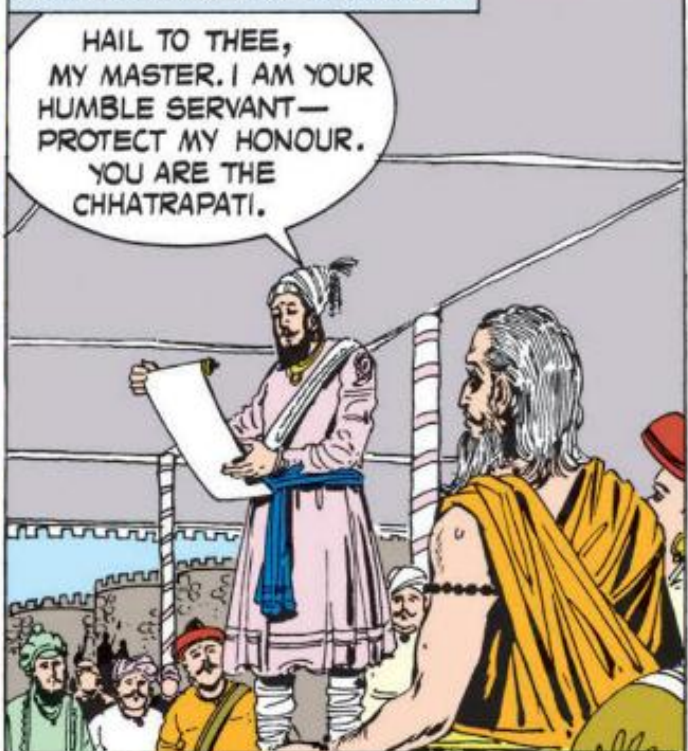
AT LAST, SHIVAJI WAS CROWNED CHHATRAPATI OF A LARGE PART OF MAVAL WHICH HE HAD LIBERATED. THE CORONATION TOOK PLACE AT RAIGADH, BUT RAMDAS COULD NOT ATTEND THE CEREMONY.

MY MISSION HAS BEEN COMPLETED. IN MY LIFETIME, I HAVE SEEN AN INDEPENDENT KINGDOM RISE WHICH WILL PROTECT THE MORAL VALUES WE HAVE CHERISHED OVER THE YEARS.



LATER WHEN RAMDAS CONVENED A CONFERENCE OF SAINTS AND SAGES AT A FORT NEAR SATARA, SHIVAJI WAS ABLE TO PAY HIM A DELAYED TRIBUTE.

HAIL TO THEE, MY MASTER. I AM YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT—PROTECT MY HONOUR. YOU ARE THE CHHATRAPATI.



THE PLACE CAME TO BE KNOWN AS SAJANGAD AND IT WAS THERE THAT RAMDAS PASSED AWAY. THE TEMPLE, CONSTRUCTED OVER HIS MORTAL REMAINS, STANDS AT SAJANGAD TO THIS DAY.